

Windflower

by fianna2452

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Summary: [HIATUS]What he saw in her, he did not know, but there was something about her he wasn't sure if he liked or not. He knew concerning himself with such a woman would be a mistake, but still...just what was she playing at? Whose side was she on? (T-rating subject to change)

## 1. I

**\*\*A/N: \*\*** This story starts in Reimeiroku and will progress all the way into the events the second season.

\* \* \*

><p>The woman stared straight ahead as she walked down the path. The sleeves of her lilac kimono swayed with the wind, as did her long, black hair. She knew not where she was going or where she even was, nor did she know why she was traveling in the first place. But as Kazehana's name suggested, she was a flower of the wind, so she went wherever the wind took her. After traveling for several days, she was quite happy when she saw a sign for a city, Kyoto. She had reached the capital. Before she could pass through and enter the city, she was stopped by two men.<p>

"You there, do you have papers?" one of the men, guarding what she assumed to be the entrance of the city, asked.

She sighed, fighting the urge to roll her eyes. She reached into her kimono and pulled out a folded paper handing it to them. The men scanned over it for a second or two before handing it back to her and letting her pass. She smirked as she passed by, stuffing the paper back into her kimono. It was forged, of course. How like them to not even notice. Now that she was in this city, Kyoto, she knew not what to do nor where to go. With that, she decided to just keep walking further into the city and explore her surroundings. Gazing to the

sides as she walked, she hadn't even realized she was going to bump into someone until it was too late.

"Hey!" the man yelled, his two companions standing behind him. With the swords at their sides, she could tell they were samurai. "Watch where you're going, woman."

"Ah, I didn't see you," she said and she began to walk around the men. One of the men grabbed her by the sleeve of her kimono, dragging her back.

"You, better apologize properly," he warned, giving her a glare.

Her violet eyes narrowed, "I said I didn't see you. That's enough explanation don't you think? Your friend here is partially at fault."

"Why you.." the guy grumbled, reaching for his sword. She strained to reach into the right sleeve of her kimono, trying to pull out her fan, but was halted when the man was forcefully shoved away from her.

"Yare, yare, samurai picking on a defenseless woman, huh?" He was taller than her, with red hair held in a ponytail and amber eyes. He wore a blue haori over the rest of his clothing. She was slightly annoyed by the fact that he had referred to her as defenseless. Defenseless was something she was not.

The men shot her a glare before scurrying away. "We won't forget this!"

Once they were gone, the man turned his attention to her and offered a friendly smile, "Harada, Sanosuke of the Roshigumi. Are you alright?"

\_Roshigumi\_? She thought to herself, looking the man over. He looked nice enough, and he did spare her the trouble of dealing with lowlifes.

"I just arrived here and have already gotten myself into some trouble," she sighed. "Thank you, Harada-san." she bowed respectfully.

"Ah, it' no problem." He scratched the back of his head, letting out a small chuckle. "So, you say you're new to Kyoto?"

"Yes," she nodded, beginning to explain. "I've just been looking around."

"Looking around? So you don't have a place to stay?" he inquired. She shook her head, earning a weary look from the man.

"Thanks for your concern, Harada-san, but you don't need to worry about me."

"It's hard not to worry about a woman wondering around the capital by herself."

"I assure you, I'll be fine."

"Alright..." He agreed apprehensively. "Hopefully I'll see you around. Ja!" He waved before walking back to a group of men dressed similarly to him.

"Yes, hopefully..." she muttered and resumed her walk, running a slender hand through her black hair. Noticing the sun was beginning to set, she knew now was the time to really start looking for somewhere to house herself in. She walked further, making it deeper into the city and eventually into what seemed to be the red light district. Her nose twitched at the smell of incense and sake that filled her sensitive nostrils.

"You, girl, are you looking for work?"

Kazehana turned to her left to see a middle aged woman dressed in an elaborate kimono.

"Possibly," she answered, eying the woman.

"How old are you?"

"Eighteen."

The woman smiled, "Perfect, come with me." She motioned with her hand for the black haired girl to follow her.

\* \* \*

><p>"Sano-san!" Toudou Heisuke called as said man arrived at the Roshigumi compound with the rest of his squad following behind him. "Hurry up before we eat without you!"<p>

"Oi, Heisuke!" Sanosuke called, following after the boy into their dining quarters. As he slid open the door, he was greeted by the commander, vice commander, and fellow captains of the Roshigumi.

"Well, look who finally decided to show up," his close friend, Nagakura Shinpachi stated.

"What took you so long, Sano-san?" Kondou, the commander, asked.

Sanosuke sighed as he took his usual place between Heisuke and Shinpachi, "I had to help a woman."

"A woman?" Shinpachi grinned. "Help her, huh? Are you sure that's all?"

"Yeah. She said she was new to Kyoto, I hope she found a place to stay."

"She didn't have a place to stay? You could have invited her here; I wouldn't mind her company!" Shinpachi laughed. Sanosuke rolled his eyes, choosing to ignore the man.

"Not everyone is a womanizer like you, Shinpatsu-san," Heisuke commented.

Shinpachi shot a glare towards the youngest in the room. "What was

that you little brat?"

"Old man!"

"Twerp!"

The others in the room each let out a sigh, before beginning to eat.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>AN: \*\*So, I already have a few chapters of this story written, since I had posted it on Wattpad before. I just added a few things and edited around a bit. I recently watched Hakuouki Movie 1: Kyoto Ranbu, so I got inspired. This story will go through all 3 seasons of Hakuouki, but of course, some things will be different.

## 2. II

"Come on!" A tan longed haired man whined, "What's wrong with a little relaxation, huh?"

"Shiranui," a redhead warned.

"Loosen up, Amagiri, you need some women in your life too!" Shiranui slapped him on the shoulder.

The blond, Chikage Kazama, shook his head as he walked through Shimabara with his two companions, Shiranui Kyo and Kyuuju Amagiri. He didn't come to the red light district often, but somehow Shiranui had talked him and Amagiri into joining him for a night out. The three eventually made their way into an ochaya.

"Make are entertainment more than easy on the eyes, woman," Shiranui said to the woman who greeted them. Amagiri gave a small nod as he walked in, Kazama, on the other hand, did not acknowledge the woman. A few minutes later, the door slid open and three women appeared with bowed heads. Each had a bottle of sake in their hands. One of the women, the eldest it appeared, looked up and introduced them. She had blonde hair that was held in the traditional elaborate hairstyle of a geiko, and brown eyes.

"Good evening a gentleman, my name is Reika, and this is Kiku and Kazehana. We'll be serving you this evening." She bowed her head once more before she got up and made her way towards Amagiri. The one named Kiku, with brown hair and brown eyes, made her way over to Shiranui, much to his pleasure. And that left the dark haired girl to him.

"Pour," he ordered, holding his cup out as soon as she took a seat next to him. The woman complied without a word. She remained silent as he held out his cup again for her to refill. He glanced at her from the corner of his eyes. She was looking down at the sake bottle in her slender hands. He then looked towards his two companions: Shiranui was of course having a blast with his woman, and even Amagiri seemed to be having an enjoyable time with his.

"Your name."

"Excuse me?" the girl asked.

He scoffed, taking a sip of his drink. "Need I repeat myself?"  
\_Humans were so slow.\_

A frown tugged at her lips and she glanced at him, noticing he wasn't looking at her, but straight ahead. "Kazehana," she answered.

\_Windflower.\_

"Last name?"

"Just Kazehana, unless you were to wed me."

His red eyes flashed towards her and narrowed seeing her lips now slightly turned upwards. "You're bolder than you look," he commented, keeping his sight fixated on her.

"Kazehana, Kiku," the eldest, Reika, called ending their short lived conversation.

"Yes, onee-san?" the two asked in unison.

"Perform something, would you?"

"Yes, onee-san."

The two girls nodded their heads to their men before excusing themselves to the other room. Less than a minute the two returned: Kazehana with a fan and Kiku with a shamisen. They made their way to the center of the room where Kiku began to play a few chords. Kazehana began to dance, waving the fan elegantly around her. Kazama observed every step she took. Every move she made was done with elegance; it was almost too graceful. Even when Kiku had messed up a chord, she still moved gracefully.

Once they were done, Kazehana placed the fan in the sleeve of her kimono and headed back towards Kazama.

"Forgive them for their mistakes," Reika announced when the two girls sat down. "They're just maiko."

\_Maiko?\_ Kazama glanced at the girl again, though she looked young, her movements were that of an experienced geisha. To think she was only a maiko...

"How old are you?"

"I'll see my nineteenth year in the winter."

"The way you speak, you weren't raised here were you?"

"You're quite questioning, aren't you?" was her reply. He narrowed his eyes, somewhat losing his patience with the girl. He was starting to like her better when she was silent.

She averted her eyes from his glare, but her lips turned upwards as she poured him another glass as she spoke, "I've only been here a few

months."

"Hn," he replied, sipping his drink.

\_Interesting\_.

\* \* \*

><p>"Again."<p>

Kazehana nodded and started the dance routine again. She and a few other maiko were practicing their dance. Because of the few mistakes her peers would make, they were forced to continue dancing until the routine was flawless, meaning even though she'd done everything perfectly, she'd still have to repeat it until the other girls got it right.

"Again," the older woman who was supervising their dancing repeated once they had finished. "You will do it until perfect."

"Yes, Onee-san," the girls said in unison. They began the dance again, moving around with grace and poise.

While they were in the middle of their dance, the door to the room slid open and one of the geisha shuffled in. "Onee-san," she greeted bowing her head. "We're in the need of more tea and sake."

The elder woman sighed and raised her hand, signaling the maikos to stop dancing. She gazed over the group of girls before her eyes settled on two. "Kosuzu, Kazehana," all she had to do was call their names.

"Yes, Onee-san," they said, bowing their heads and excusing themselves from the room.

They slipped on their geta sandals as they exited the building, making their way onto the road. Kazehana had only been out of the red light district a handful of times, not counting the few times she'd sneak off, and it seemed whenever she was ordered out to town she was sent with Kosuzu or Kiku. In fact, she and Kosuzu seemed to be together for almost everything; probably because they roomed together along with Kiku. She wasn't complaining though; she found the younger girl quite endearing.

"Hm," Kosuzu started. "The tea is closer, so we should get that first right?" Kazehana nodded and they began their short journey. They walked in silence, admiring the bustling of the streets filled with merchants and everyday people.

"Kosuzu!"

Said girl abruptly stopped, Kazehana stopping just behind her as well. "Ibuki-san?" the blonde questioned, looking up at the boy with wide brown eyes. His long blue hair, which was held in a ponytail, swung behind him as he made his way over to the girl.

"Kosuzu, it really is you," the boy known as, Ibuki said. "What are you doing here?"

"Who is this, Ryuunosuke?" Another man questioned, walking out from

behind him. He had shaggy brown hair and bright, emerald green eyes. Over his clothes he wore a blue haori, just like Sanosuke, the man she had met almost a month ago when she'd first arrived in Kyoto.

"Ah, Okita-san, this is Kosuzu and..." he paused looking over to the black haired girl.

"Kazehana."

"Kazehana, huh? That's a pretty name," the brunet commented, eying her with a smirk.

Kazehana covered her mouth with the sleeve of her kimono to hide her small smile, and said "Thank you." She then looked over to her friend and said, "Kosuzu, we should get going before Onee-san scolds us for taking too long." The two girls bowed before walking away.

"They're maiko?" Okita questioned his companion as they watched the two girls leave. Based on the way there were dressed, it was the only logical answer.

Ibuki scratched his head. "Kosuzu is, but I don't know about the other one."

"Hm...Maybe we should pay a visit to Shimabara, hm?" he suggested playfully.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>AN: \*\*What do you think so far? I apologize for any spelling or grammar mistakes. I don't proofread lol.

### 3. III

"Do you think Ibuki-kun and his friend will come tonight, Hana?"

Kazehana glanced down at Kosuzu who sat on her knees in front of her; she was doing the brunette's hair. Hana was Kosuzu's nickname for her.

"They might," She paused to put a clip in the brunettes's tresses and asked, "Why? Do you like that Ibuki boy, Kosuzu?"

Kosuzu's cheeks turned pink and she glanced away. "I don't know," she answered, "He's really sweet, but he confuses me."

"Men can be confusing," she commented. "Don't worry about them too much."

"Kazehana, Kosuzu!"

"Yes, Onee-san?" the girls turned to the now open door. An older woman clad in an elaborate kimono, face painted white, motioned them over.

"I have your assignments for tonight. Kosuzu, you're assigned to the usual room with Kiku and Moriko." She then glanced to the black

haired girl, "Kazehana, you'll be working alone in the room next door to theirs." She looked over the two to see if they had any questions, and then nodded. "They're waiting for you, be ready in five minutes," she asserted before leaving.

Kosuzu turned to her friend with and pouted, "You're too good at this, Hana. You're the newest maiko here and already you're doing solo jobs. You'll become a real geiko in no time."

"That means my mizuage\*\*[1]\*\* will be soon approaching."

"Art you scared?" Kosuzu questioned.

Kazehana shrugged her shoulders. "Maybe I'll be lucky enough for it to be with a man of my choice."

"Oh," Kosuzu looked down. "I hope I'm lucky as well."

"Let's get going, ne? We shouldn't keep our guests waiting." Kazehana said with a smile, changing the subject.

"Ah, right."

The two walked out of the room and onto the main shimabara street. It was busy, filled with many men, women, and geisha alike. They quickly made it over to the tea house, which didn't take long seeing as though it was only a few feet from where the geisha and maiko were housed. Both girls walked up the wooden steps and stood in front of their designated rooms. Moriko and Kiku were already outside waiting for Kosuzu. The girls nodded towards each other as a greeting.

"This is where we part ways," Kazehana said to Kosuzu.

"This is the first time I've served without you, Hana. What if I make a mistake? You're always there to help when I mess up." Kosuzu worried with furrowed brows.

The black haired girl let out a small chuckle. "Don't worry, you'll do fine. Plus, you'll have Kiku." Kiku sent the her a reassuring smile.

"Come on, Kosuzu," Moriko started, putting her hand on the door. "Let's go before we make them wait any longer." She began to slide the door open, shuffling in. Kazehana watched as the other two, Kiku and Kosuzu, followed suit. She waited until they were fully inside and the door was closed before opening her own and shuffling quietly inside.

"Good evening. I'm Kazehana and I'll be serving you this evening," she said quietly, bowing her head in respect.

"You again," came her greet. Kazehana's ears twitched at the familiar voice. She looked up to see the blond male she had served with Kiku and Reika several weeks ago. Her lips curved up into a small smirk.

"You're alone this time," she commented as she made her way over to him. She picked up the bottle of sake and poured a bit into the cup that was resting on the tray in front of him.



"You don't strike me as the type to come by yourself," she added.  
"Lonely, I suppose?" She inquired.

He took a sip of the drink, ignoring the girl's comment. In truth, her observation was correct, not the lonely part, but him coming by himself. However, there were times when he'd settle down for a drink and maybe even lay with a woman, but those times weren't often.

"I don't recall ever getting your name." The girl spoke again, looking up at him with small violet eyes that seemed to hold a bit of mischief. He'd only seen a few with an eye color so rare. He inwardly scoffed; like he was one to talk, his eyes were red.

"Kazama Chikage," he answered, taking another sip from the cup before holding it out for her to refill it. She nodded as she poured more sake into his cup.

"Kazama Chikage!" she repeated to herself. She looked him over as he sipped his drink. "I like that name; it fits you."

"More," he demanded holding out his cup. As Kazehana leaned over to refill his cup, a scream echoed from beyond the walls. She jumped, spilling the contents onto his dark brown haori. He let out a noise of discontent, glaring at the girl.

"Sorry," she apologized bowing her head. Another scream came from next door, following a loud male voice.

Kazehana stood up and bowed again. "Excuse me, let me-" She was going to excuse herself to see what was going on, but he seemed to already know as he cut her off.

"Go," he ordered, folding his arms. She bowed her head again before scurrying out of the room and into the next.

\* \* \*

><p>"What's going on here?" She asked, seeing five other men, one of them she recognized as Ibuki, in the room and the three maiko. Kosuzu, Kiku, and Moriko were on the floor with their heads bowed. All eyes turned to her, including the belligerent ones of a tall graying man.<p>

"Who are you?!"

"I work here. Can't you tell?" Was her response, earning a growl from the belligerent man.

"No manners, just like them," he snarled. He pointed to the three girls. "These three deserve to be punished for insulting me!"

"Serizawa-san!" One of the men yelled. He was dressed in a purple kimono tucked into his gray hakama.

"If you were men then I would have merely beheaded you," the drunkard, known as Serizawa, started, "But instead, I'll just cut your hair."

"No!" Moriko begged. "We're sorry for our rudeness. We sincerely

apologize, but please don't cut our hair. If you do that then we won't be able to entertain!"

"You should have thought about that before insulting a warrior!" He reached for his katana, and the girls began to cry.

"Serizawa-san! You insulted them first by asking them to strip!" Ibuki ran over only to be knocked away.

"Hm? You do it then, Ibuki. A dog should follow its master."

Ibuki clenched his fist and shook his head. "Like hell I will!"

"Then you'll offer your head instead?" Serizawa asked, knocking the boy away. "Who will cut their hair now?"

"I'll do it." A black haired, purple eyed man stepped forward, pulling out his katana. The three girls began crying even harder.

"Hijikata-san!" Ibuki was shocked.

"I'll do it, but will it be alright if I just cut their hair ornaments?" Hijikata asked. Serizawa was about to answer, but Kazehana spoke instead.

"Just cut my hair."

"W-what?" One of the men questioned in shock.

"No! This has nothing to do with you!" Ibuki yelled. The girls also began to protest.

"Shut up," Kazehana ordered as she made her way over to the black haired, purple eyed man. As she walked, she began taking out all the ornaments and clips in her hair, letting the long tresses fall down her shoulders and back. He looked at her in awe as she made her way to him.

"Will it be alright if he just cuts my hair?" she asked when she finally reached him. "It's pretty long," she said as she ran her fingers through it.

"Hn, fine. At least someone is willing to take responsibility," Serizawa huffed out.

"No!" Kosuzu yelled, only to be shot a glare from the girl about to have her hair chopped off.

Hijikata hesitated as he took the girl's hair in his hand and brought his sword up with the other.

"Speaking of responsibility, Serizawa-san," Kazehana started as the hair began to fall to her feet. "If you want that kind of show, then you should have gone somewhere else." The man shot her a glare before stomping away, followed by the two other men and a reluctant Ibuki.

"Forgive me," Hijikata said as the last of her hair fell onto the

floor. Her once hip length hair now reached just below her chin.

"I suppose I won't be able to serve any time soon," she sighed running a hand through her short hair.

"Forgive me," Hijikata repeated, bowing his head.

She turned and gave him a small smile. "Don't worry yourself with apologizing to me. I've been meaning to get a trim, you just saved me the trouble. I should apologize for the mess those girls caused. Forgive us," she spoke bowing her head.

"I'll be on my way now," the black haired man gave her a nod before leaving.

Kazehana turned her attention to the three girls who were still on their knees bowing their heads.

"We're sorry, Hana," Kosuzu apologized.

"Please forgive us," Kiku whimpered. She ignored the girls and headed for the exit.

"Onee-san and Okaa-san will not be happy when they hear about this. Clean this place up, it's a mess." She ordered before sliding the door closed behind her.

"Forgive me for taking so long, Kazama-san," Kazehana apologized as she entered her assigned room.

"You hair." Her hair was the first thing he noticed. When she had left, her long thick hair had been styled in the traditional geisha way, now her hair was too short to even think of doing such an elaborate style.

"I just had to clean up a mess," she let out a small laugh. "More?" she asked holding up the bottle of sake. He gave her a curt nod, watching her intently as she filled the cup. He wouldn't push any further; whatever had happened while she was away was none of his concern.

"You're quite lucky, Kazama-san."

"Why is that?" he questioned, genuinely curious, though he wouldn't admit nor show it.

"You will be my last customer for a while. I won't be able to entertain with my hair like this." She frowned to herself, looking up in thought. "I hope this short hair doesn't disrupt my looks too much." She shrugged, reassuring herself, "It grows fast anyways."

"Hn." Kazama furrowed his brows as he sipped his drink. \_This girl.

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\* \* \*

><p><strong>[1]- <strong>From what I 've researched, Mizuage is a coming of age ceremony signifying a maiko's transition to a geisha. I've read some mixed things about this, so I'm a little unsure, but

apparently they would be sponsored, basically the guy who paid the most, and the sponsor would deflower her. I'm not sure what's exactly true or not, but I definitely want to incorporate this mizuage stuff into the story.

Also in case you're confused when I put "geiko", it's the same as geisha just in the Kyoto dialect, so sorry if I interchange them throughout.

Forgive me if any of the characters mainly Chikage are OOC.

#### 4. IV

**\*\*A/N: 9/28/2014 \*\***I went back and watched little bits and pieces of Reimeiroku(since that is where this story begins, though it will go all the way to the events of Shinsengumi Kitan and Hekketsuroku) just to be a little more accurate with the telling of the story because I already know I'm off on so many things. Anyways, again, I changed everything that said "Shinsengumi" to "Roshigumi" since that is what they were called with Serizawa-san. This is just until Serizawa is gone, which will be soon :D

\* \* \*

><p>"Your hair is growing so fast, Kazehana-san."<p>

Kazehana glanced in the mirror at her own reflection. Just a month ago her hair was at her chin, now it brushed the tops of her shoulders. She supposed for some it would be considered fast growth, but to her this was how it normally grew. She was thankful it didn't take her hair long to grow because she preferred herself with long hair.

Kazehana was currently helping the other maiko do their hair and get dressed, since she wouldn't be performing until her hair at the preferred length. It had been almost two months since the incident between Kiku, Moriko, Kosuzu, and Serizawa, yet the three maiko were still scared to be in her presence. Whenever they were near her, all they'd do was apologize or even avoid her. They probably thought she was mad at them.

Yes she was less than pleased with having her precious long locks chopped, anyone would be, but she had gotten over it. She couldn't say she was entirely sour about not being able to perform; however, it did leave her with more cleaning and preparation duties. She was clearly the best of the bunch and for her to be stuck cleaning up, well... \_Maybe that's a bit conceitedâ€|\_She thought to herself, turning her focus back to the girl in front of her.

"There, you're all done, Tomomi," she said, putting the finishing touches to the girl's hair.

"Thanks so much, Kazehana-san. I don't know what we'd do without you," the girl said before getting up and leaving. Kazehana gave a small smile before motioning for another girl to come over. It was Kosuzu. The brunette nervously sat in front of her, between her and the mirror.

"There's no need to act so nervous around me, Kosuzu," she

sighed.

Kosuzu looked at her through the mirror. "You're not mad?"

Kazehana shook her head and answered, "I've told you already that I'm not mad." Even with her reassurance, the girl still looked as if she was dwelling on something. "Is something else wrong, Kosuzu?" Kazehana asked as she began styling Kosuzu's hair into the traditional maiko style.

"N-nothing's wrong," the girl answered, only to receive a knowing look from her current stylist. She sighed, "Ibuki-kun."

"The boy with that irate Serizawa-san?" Kazehana asked. Kosuzu nodded. "Did he do something to you?"

"No! Ibuki is too innocent to do such things."

"Then do tell, what is the problem?"

Kosuzu sighed, taking a moment to think before answering. "He told meâ€¦he would pay for me to leave this place." Kazehana's lips parted slightly and then closed as she thought of what to say. This was indeed a bit of a shock. Ryunosuke Ibuki did not seem like he was capable enough, nor had the means, to pay a maiko's debt. If anything, he'd have to sneak her out and run away.

Noticing her silence, the younger girl continued, "I haven't given him an answer yet. I'm not sure what to do. I like being a maiko, but I also want to be with Ibuki-kun." She glanced down and admitted, "I was hoping you'd be able to give me some advice."

Kazehana laughed, "Me? Give you advice on that?" She shook her head. "What makes you think I'd have any insight on anything like that?"

"Well, you're very beautiful, Hana. I just assumed that you've had men offer to take you away before."

"Tch," Kazehana sucked her teeth. "Have you forgotten that I have only been here for a few months? I've yet to build up such a customer base." She then sighed, looking up. "Honestly, Kosuzu, all I can tell you is to follow your heart. If it lies with him, then so be it."

Said girl nodded. "You're right, Hana. Thank you."

"Don't move your head, Kosuzu. You'll mess up your hair," she scolded.

"A-ah right, sorry."

\* \* \*

><p>A month later, Kazehana was preparing to entertain guests again, like the other maiko. Today would be her first day being able to serve again. Her hair had finally grown out to what was deemed suitable. As she looked herself over in the mirror once more, she wondered who she'd be serving tonight. Her mind briefly wandered onto a red eyed blond. The corner of her mouth twitched upward at the

thought of the man. She wondered if he had ever been back since she had served him on that hectic night.<p>

"Kazehana, your guests are waiting!" The girl sighed and turned around, leaving the reflection of the mirror and heading out to the main house.

She slid the door open and bowed her head. "Good evening. My name is Kazehana and I'll be serving you tonight."

"Ah, Kazehana-san! I didn't know you were a geiko!" Kazehana smiled seeing the redhead who had helped her when she first came to Kyoto. Not only was he there, but the men she remembered Hijikata and Souji were also in the room, along with a few others she didn't recognize.

"Harada-san of the Roshigumii. It's nice to see you again, and I'm only a maiko."

"Hou~? Are you only going to greet him? We're a part of the Roshigumi too, you know." Souji asked playfully.

"Is that so?" He nodded. "A small world it is then. Well, it's nice to see you too, Okita-san." She turned to Hijikata and nodded her head, "As well as you, Hijikata-san."

"Hey what about us?!" Complained a smaller, younger, boy, with long brown hair. "How come she knows you guys, but not us?"

"Shut it, will you?" The bigger man next to him placed the palm of his head on top of his head, pressing down, causing the younger one to flinch. "Why would she want to greet a pipsqueak like you?"

"She didn't greet you either, Shinpatsu-san!"

"Oi, Heisuke, you brat!"

"Oi!" Hijikata called to two to attention. "Don't make such a racket you two! The Roshigumi has already caused enough trouble for Kazehana-san and the ochaya."

Kazehana gave a charming smile. "You're too kind, Hijikata-san. There are certain guests who come here that cause much more of a disturbance." His forehead creased together, catching her allusion to his previous encounter with her.

"Again, I apologize for the actions of Serizawa-san," he stated.

"Ah, Serizawa caused trouble again?" One of the men wondered aloud.

"It's fine, but I have one questionâ€¦!" Kazehana stated.

"What is it?"

"Is Serizawa a part of the Roshigumi as well?"

"Yes, he's one of our commanders," Hijikata answered.

Kazehana furrowed her brows and commented, "I hope your other commanders aren't like him. Men like him will be your downfall."

"Kondou-san is nothing like him!" Souji protested, staring directly into her eyes.

"Ah," Sanosuke chuckled lightly, trying to lighten the suddenly tense air, "let's drink up, shall we?"

"Yes, you're right. Sorry for keeping you waiting," Kazehana apologized. Her eyes lingered on the green haired man for a second before she began filling the men's cups with sake.

For the remainder of the evening, she sat quietly observing the group, pouring them drinks, and occasionally making small conversation. They were quite an entertaining crowd, especially the trio that consisted of Sanosuke, Shinpachi, and Heisuke. She looked amusedly at Hijikata as he struggled to keep his eyes open, his body swaying slightly even though he was sitting down.

"For such an uptight man, his tolerance for alcohol is low," Souji commented when he saw the amused look on her face.

"I don't think such a stern man would get so easily drunk," Kazehana chuckled.

"You should have a drink with us," Souji said as he held out his cup to her for it to be refilled.

"I couldn't possibly. I'm here to entertain you, not drink."

Souji smirked, pushing the not filled cup close to her red painted lips. "It'll entertain me if you have a drink with us," he said playfully, "Just one sip."

"Nice try, Okita-san, but I won't."

"Alright, I guess I'll just have to try again next time," he said giving up, though the smirk was still present on his face. Kazehana just shook her head, continuing to pour sake upon request.

\* \* \*

><p>After she finished serving the Roshigumi, Kazehana made her way back to her quarters in the okiya, which she happened to share with Kosuzu. It was late, so she figured the girl would be sleeping since her guests left much earlier than Kazehana's. When she reached her room though, the younger girl was wide awake sitting on her futon.<p>

"I've been waiting for you, Hana," she greeted the older girl.

"Oh, have you?"

She nodded. "You were serving the Roshigumi tonight, weren't you?"

"Yes-"

"Was Ibuki-kun there?" she cut in.

Kazehana shook her head, "No, he wasn't."

"Oh...alright. Well, goodnight, Hana."

"Goodnight."

\* \* \*

><p><strong>AN: \*\*I'm just going to stop here before I drag anything on longer than it needs to be. Sorry for the forever wait, just to be given this. Hopefully the next chapter won't take nearly as long, but I'm very busy with school and moving and wanting to sleep 24/7. Sorry for any grammatical/spelling errors.

## 5. V

\*\*A/N:\*\* I plan for this story to go all the way into Shinsengumi Kitan and Hekketsuroku. AND I'm sure some of you can tell, this story doesn't completely follow the order of how things went down in the anime. Oh well, it doesn't matter for now since what's happening now is from Reimeiroku, but after that everything else will happen in the correct order (\*sigh\* I'm going to have to re-watch seasons 1 & 2 now lol).

\*\*Onwardsâ€|\*\*

\* \* \*

><p><em>Hmâ€|what should I get? <em>Kazehana thought as she walked through the busy streets of Kyoto. It was midafternoon and instead of spending her free time in her quarters or with the other maiko in the boarding house, she decided to go out and explore. Usually she went with Kosuzu, but lately she had been seeing the girl less and less often. She had a feeling that the younger girl would soon be leaving with that Ibuki boy.

Taking in her surrounding as she walked, she had never noticed just how many little markets there were around Kyoto. Wanting something sweet, she chose to stop by a small dango shop. She sat quietly on the bench outside of the shop, legs crossed at the ankles, eating her dango. The weather was nice today and the wind was gently blowing her black hair, which this time was not in a typical maiko fashion, but instead straight worn down.

"Mind if I join you?" Kazehana looked up at the sound of the new voice. The person stood in front of her with his hand lazily resting on his hip.

"Okita-san, what are you doing here?"

"I believe I asked first, didn't I?"

Kazehana sighed, scooting over to give him some room to sit. The brunet plopped down beside her, stretching his arms behind his head and leaning back against the shack.

"Being in a house full of men is no fun. It's good to have a break



once in a while."

Kazehana raised a slender black eyebrow. "A breakâ€|"

He smirked sent her a smirk. "A little break never hurt anyone, right?"

"If being in a house full of men is so tedious, you should come to Shimabara more often."

Okita stared at her for a moment before bursting out in a fit of laughter. "Come to Shimabara?" he repeated. "I'd say you were just trying to get another customer. Am I right, Kazehana-chan?"

The girl's lips twitched upwards, in the subtlest of smirks. "Perhaps you are, Okita-san."

"Doesn't living with a bunch of women get annoying?" he inquired, once had recovered from his previous fit.

"From time to time."

"Then you should come to the Roshigumi," he said, turning the tables on her.

Kazehana sucked her teeth. "And what would a maiko be doing in a house full of samurai?"

"Who knows." He shrugged with a smirk. Kazehana shook her head and continued with eating her dango.

"I should get back," Souji announced after a few minutes of silence. He sent the girl a wave, grinning. "See ya later, Kazehana-san!"

Kazehana nodded and stood up, preparing to leave as well. Little did she know she would be seeing him sooner than later.

\* \* \*

><p>The ochaya wasn't very busy, so she didn't have to entertain tonight. It wasn't often that a maiko or geiko was given the night off. Not being one to waste such an opportunity, she gladly accepted not having to work the night and decided on taking an evening stroll. Knowing that the streets of Kyoto, especially near Shimabara, would be busy and filled drunks, she decided to take a less populated route.<p>

After a few minutes of silently walking, she found herself a bridge. Her brows furrowed as she saw two figured walking across it, their backs to her. As she neared, she heard a familiar voice call out, "Tonouchi-san." The one, she assumed was Tonouchi, turned around, making brief eye contact with her before he was immediately cut down with the blade of the other. Kazehana stopped in her tracks. As if sensing her presence, the man turned around, sword still in hand.

"Oh, Kazehana-chan, what a surprise. I just came from Shimabara, but I didn't see you."

"Okita-san."

He smirked seeing her mouth turn into a tight line and her brows furrow. "That face you're making will cause wrinkles," he nonchalantly referred to the creasing of her forehead. He began making his way towards her. She took a step back and pulled out the small hand fan she always carried around from the right sleeve of her kimono. It was a purple, similar to the shade of her eyes, with scarce cherry blossom designs and the single kanji for wind that became viewable once opened. Instead of a wooden handle, it was metal, just like the tips of the fan.

"Hou~," he made a noise once he saw the fan. "How elegant; what are you planning to do with that?"

He continued getting closer, and Kazehana continued to step back until the small of her back hit the railing. Her eyes widened as she teetered. A large hand grabbed her by the hip, preventing her from falling back. Green eyes peered down at her mischievously.

"Gotcha', Kazehana-chan~" Her eyes narrowed as he pulled her closer, leaning down so he was eye level with her. Sword still in hand, he brought it up to her neck, letting the cool blade gently brush against it. His eyes, which were almost unsettlingly playful, turned cold, his smirk now gone.

"You won't tell anyone of what you saw today; will you, Kazehana-chan?" His use of "chan" was anything but friendly; it held a dangerous intent. "I might have to kill you if you do."

"You dare raise your sword to a woman, Okita-san?" she questioned rhetorically, ignoring his inquiry. That earned her quite the glare. "I see that I was wrong to think that you Roshigumi were any different," she said, more for herself than him. "You're no different than that Serizawa-san." Being compared to the brash and belligerent Serizawa seemed to have struck a chord in him as his sharp gaze faltered and his grip on his sword loosened.

With her right hand, she gave the man a harsh shove, giving herself enough room to maneuver a good few feet from him. With a single flick of her wrist, she closed the fan and placed it back up her sleeve. She frowned seeing small droplets of red on her lilac kimono. Luckily, it wasn't her maiko clothing; however, it was her favorite.

Glancing at the dead body just a few feet away, she took a deep breath and turned around. "You don't have to worry about me saying anything. I have no interest in your affairs." With that, she began walking away, leaving him alone on the bridge.

\* \* \*

><p>"Kazehana-san!" Kiku and Kosuzu swarmed over to her when she entered their living quarters in the boarding house as soon as they saw the drops of red staining her kimono.<p>

"Are you hurt?"

"What happened?"

"Is that blood?"

"Are you alright?"

Kazehana sighed as they swarmed her with questions.

"But Kaz-" Kosuzu started, only to be interrupted.

"I'm fine," she reassured. "Don't worry about me, I'm fine. Both of you should rest, okay?" The two girls glanced at her wearily before giving up. Kazehana sighed, \_troublesome.\_

\* \* \*

><p>"Souji!"<p>

"Pipe down, will you, Heisuke? I told you I'm not hurt anywhere," Souji said as he walked passed the younger boy. Taking a seat on the steps, he began undoing his sandals.

"Souji!"

"Hijikata-san, Hajime-kun, what's up?" he casually asked. He turned around, the usual mischievous look on his face made more menacing by the splatters of blood on his cheeks and clothing.

Kondou, whom was behind Hijikata gasped. The latter's brows furrowed with a harsh glare. "Souji, whose blood is thatâ€|?"

"I'll explain later," he answered as he stood up. "I think I'm going to rest, I'm tired after just killing someone." He gave them a lazy wave before walking away.

In his quarters, he stripped himself of his blood stained haori. Taking a damp cloth, he sat down on his futon and cleaned his face of blood. Once done, he threw the cloth in the corner somewhere before lying back and staring at the ceiling.

He thought back to his encounter just a few moments after he'd struck down Tonouchi. "Tch," he scoffed. Just thinking of the man put a bad taste in his mouth. \_He should have known better than to try something against Kondou-san! Butâ€|\_

Thoughts drifting back to the black haired maiko, he frowned. It was unsettling to him how she looked so calm with a sword pressed to her neck. Any other woman, and other person in general, would have been terrified, but she didn't blink. In fact, he remembered the only time her calm expression faltered was when she had almost fallen over the bridge. She appeared more afraid to fall into a body of water than to have her throat sliced. It made him wonder, what more was there to her?

\* \* \*

><p><strong>AN: \*\*Thoughts? I always appreciate a review! I feel like my chapters are so short. I got this out pretty fast though. I guess I was feeling a little anxious to write this. O Chikage-kun, Chikage-kun! Wherefore art thou, Chikage-kun? He'll be making an appearance soon, maybe next chapterâ€|

**\*\*Sorry for any spelling/grammatical errors!\*\***

## 6. VI

**\*\*A/N: \*\***I apologize for the wait. It's a little fast paced, but it was necessary. I just skimmed through this, so sorry if I missed any spelling/grammatical errors.

\* \* \*

><p>"Hana."<p>

"Hana."

Kazehana popped one eye opened at being shaken awake. It took some time, but her sight slowly adjusted to the darkened room to see that it was Kosuzu who had woken her up. "I hope you have a good reason for disturbing my sleep." She said monotonously. She spoke quietly, careful not to wake Kiku who slept a few feet away in her own futon.

"Ibuki-kun has come for me," she whispered quickly.

Kazehana's eyes widened and she quickly sat up, her futon cover sliding down to her legs. "So soon?" she questioned, brows furrowing. Kosuzu nodded and gave her a smile.

"I'm glad I got to know you, Kazehana-san; I look up to you. I wish I was half the woman you are."

"You speak too highly of me."

There was a pause before Kosuzu suddenly asked, "You don't have anyone tying you down to the tea house, do you?"

"No, I don't."

"Then you should come with us!"

Kazehana sighed, "Unlike me, Kosuzu, you have someone, Ibuki. If I were to leave, I'd have no one, nowhere to go."

"But Ha-"

"I'll leave when the time comes, Kosuzu," she cut the girl off. Lying back down, she turned onto her side, so her back faced the brown haired girl. She pulled the covers up to her shoulders. "You should go before you get caught. I wish you and Ibuki luck."

"I guess this is goodbye." When Kazehana didn't respond, Kozusu stood up and took one final looked around what would be her former home, before making her way to Ibuki, who waited for her outside.

\* \* \*

><p>Later on, when Kazehana left her quarters that afternoon to help clean the rooms and prepare for tonight's serving, she was surprised to see a familiar blue haori and brown hair leaning against the railing across from her room. A frown tugged at her lips as she

looked the man over.<p>

"Have you come to threaten me again?" Her voice came out in an almost bored tone.

"You remember that, Kazehana-chan?" He asked playfully, never turning around to face her. Of course she remembered. It had been several weeks since their encounter at the bridge, but the image of him killing that man and then pressing his bloodied sword to her neck was clear. \_Disgusting. \_She thought, thinking back to the red dots that had stained her favorite kimono.

"Then what are you here for?"

"I came to apologize for that night. I shouldn't have threatened a woman."

"Well, if that's all you came for then-"

"Did I scare you, Kazehana-chan?" He interrupted, turning around and giving her his usual smirk. She could see his forehead protector was on, that along with the blue haori meant that he was on patrol.

Kazehana let out a snort, "Just when I was going to accept your apology. Skipping your duties as well? I'll have to think twice now."

He pouted mockingly. "Aw, Kazehana-chan, don't be like that."

"You should get going. I have plenty to do now that Kosuzu is gone."

"Gone? What happened to her?"

"That Ibuki boy took her away; I guess he really was smitten with her." She didn't miss the slight twitch that came from his eyebrow and the narrowing of his eyes as she spoke.

"Interesting." he hummed. "Are you jealous that Ibuki took her away?" he questioned, his green eyes meeting her purples ones. Kazehana shook her head.

"Hardly."

"Do you want to be taken away?"

"Why? Are you offering?"

"Maybe."

Was he serious? Kazehana almost laughed, and she would have if it weren't for the head of the house making her presence known.

"Ahem, are you finished chatting, Kazehana?" The older woman looked disapprovingly between her apprentice and the man she was apparently talking to.

"Yes."

"Then, please, a word." She motioned for the girl to follow her.

"You should get back to patrolling, Okita-san." Kazehana gave him one last look before turning and following her senior.

"What did you want to talk to me about?" Kazehana asked once they stopped near the back of the tea house.

"Kazehana, your skills as a maiko have grown extraordinarily fast for such a short period of time. Girls are usually brought up at a young age and work many years to hone their skills, but you, Kazehana, you have progressed in such a short time. It's time you make the transition into an official geiko."

"When?" Was the only thing Kazehana asked.

"We'll hold your ceremony in a week's time. That should be more than enough time to prepare yourself, correct?" She said nothing, so the woman continued. "You'll certainly have higher bids than the others. Take care of yourself until then, Kazehana." With that, the woman walked away, leaving Kazehana to herself, or so she thought.

"What did she mean by higher bids?" Okita asked as he came out from his spot of hiding.

"Okita Souji, did you follow us? I thought I told you to go back to your patrol."

"What did she mean by all that?" He insisted, ignoring her.

Kazehana sighed, folding her arms in the sleeves of her yukata. "Mizuage."

"Mizuage?"

"It's a ceremony held for when a maiko becomes a geiko. The kimono, ornaments, everything is quite expensive, so an auction it held. The maiko, now geiko, is sold to the highest bidder for the evening."

"And you're okay with that?" Seeing the girl before him shrug, he frowned at her disregard for herself. He was positive she wasn't okay with that, who would be?

"Okita-san, let me ask you something." She paused, looking around. "Where are we right now?"

"Shimabara."

"Exactly," she replied.

"But -"

"Listen, Okita-san," she cut him off. "I appreciate your sentiment, but it doesn't concern you."

"Maybe \_I'll \_bid on you," he stated, looking her dead in the eye. Kazehana's eye widened, and just when she was about to respond, he broke out in laughter. "Just kidding, Kazehana-chan." He turned away,

heading off.

\* \* \*

><p>Evening soon came, and Kazahana was dressed in her usual kimono, making her way to her assigned room.<p>

"Where is Kosuzu?" one of the older women questioned as she passed by. Kazehana gave her a shrug, though she knew exactly where the maiko was, well, technically she didn't know where she was. Kosuzu and Ibuki had to be in a new city by now. The woman let out an aggravated huff before quickly brushing passed her while continuing to ask, "Kosuzu? Where is Kosuzu?" Kazehana was surprised that it was only now they were inquiring about the young girl's whereabouts.

When she made it to her designated room, she got down to her knees and bowed her head as she slid open the door. "Good evening, my name is Kazehana and I'll be serving you tonight." When she looked up, she was greeted by piercing red eyes. Her painted lips twitched upward ever so slightly.

"You're alone again," she stated as made her way inside. She hissed lightly as she scratched the back of her hand on the door as she was closing it. "How clumsy of me." Ignoring the measly scratch, she picked up the two bottles of sake she had brought and shuffled her way over to the familiar man. Taking a seat next to him, she placed the bottles in the space between them.

"Hn." was his response. He held his cup toward her, signaling for her to begin pouring. He caught a glimpse of her blemished hand as she poured. Once she was done, he brought the cup to his lips, drinking all of its contents in one go. "The sake is not bad."

"Are you saying it was the past times you've been here?" He didn't respond. "I see. You haven't been here for a while, well, I should say I haven't served you in a while, so perhaps that could be why."

"Arrogant," he commented, again pushing his cup to her.

Kazahana let out a light and airy laugh. "My apologies. I suppose my becoming geiko next week has filled my head a bit." As she poured more sake into his cup, she continued, "A ceremony is being held in a week's time." She placed a slender hand on the middle of her chest, rubbing the fabric that adorned it with her thumb.

"I've yet to see why you're informing me of this," he said as he brought the drink to his mouth. He again glanced at the hand that fiddled with her kimono.

\_Interesting. \_He knew there was something off about this woman, he had his suspicions, but now he was positive.

"Ha, I suppose I'm now realizing how much I'm not looking forward to the ceremony. Being sold off to some man I hardly know." She brought the hand down, and used it to pour the last of the sake in his cup as she used her other hand to pick up the second bottle.

"I do not care to listen to your problems, woman."

"My apologies."

\* \* \*

><p>"They're going to think you look beautiful, Kazehana-san," A geiko named Noriko, said once the girl had arrived at the ceremony room. Her hair was let down to its full length instead of the usual updo, and she was dressed in an elaborate kimono, the most expensive one she had as a maiko.<p>

"I could care less what they think of me." Kazehana replied. The week had come and gone far too fast for her liking. Now it was the day of the ceremony and she was less than excited for what would be occurring that night. Noriko frowned at her words. She placed a gentle hand on Kazehana's shoulder, giving her a sympathetic smile.

"Don't worry, Kazehana. We all had to go through with it. Masami's highest bid ended up falling in love with her and paying for her to leave. It could happen to you too." Kazehana fought the urge to roll her eyes.

"Did it happen to you?" She asked. Noriko looked away, no, of course it hadn't. There were only a handful of girls who were lucky enough to be like Masami. "I'm not worried." She assured.

"Fine," Noriko said. "Go on inside, the ceremony should be starting."

When she entered the room, she could see quite a few men had shown up. They sat around with the other geiko pouring them drinks and serving them food.

"There's our newest geiko, Kazehana," the headwoman of the house announced. All eyes turned to her, but she ignored them staring straight ahead. The woman motioned for Kazehana to join her at the front of the room. "Let's begin the bidding, shall we?"

The bidding went on for several minutes, each man outbidding each other until the price was set too high for anyone to willingly outbid the contender. \_3 ryo\_\*\*\*\*\*\_. \_The rotund man who had bid was visibly older than her and looked to be of a higher status. Kazehana's lips formed into a tight line. No one else was willing to bid any higher. She was astounded that someone would even pay that much for her to begin with. Just as the man was getting up to claim his prize, the shoji door to the room slid open, a new figure entering the room.

"4 ryo."

\* \* \*

><p><strong>\*<strong>Ryo was used during this period before yen was introduced. Oh god, I spent about two hours trying to figure out how much one ryo was worth back then and it's literally impossible to figure out. It's so confusing; there are so many different answers, so I just used random numbers which I am 100% are inaccurate, but if I try to work everything out again I'll cry blood. I will never put prices on anything in this story again lol.



\*\*A/N: \*\*I'm not entirely clear on what Mizuage is, I've seen multiple definitions, but I just used the deflowering one since I think it would fit the whole Shimabara thing. Hakuouki makes Shimabara seem like it's just a geisha district, but when I did some research, it was the courtesan district in Kyoto, so I tried to kind ofâ€¦put both of them together kind of...

## 7. VII

\*\*A/N: \*\*Thanks for the reviews. I really appreciate them and they encourage me to write more. And with this chapter, the story begins to unfoldâ€¦|

\* \* \*

><p>"Eh, Souji, are you alright?" Kondo Isami asked when he noticed the younger man was being unusually quiet.<p>

"Yeah, you haven't even touched your food, yet!" Heisuke pointed out. Everyone had already dug into their evening meal, while Souji had spent the entire time staring at his tray.

"What?" Okita Souji looked up, broken from his thoughts, to see the commanders of the newly renamed Shinsengumi staring at him.

"Is everything alright, Souji?" Kondo repeated.

He grinned, "Don't worry, Kondo-san, everything's fine."

"Alright, if you say so, Souji. Now eat," Kondo commanded.

"Hai, hai."

He joined the group in eating, and soon enough, the usual meal time banter occurred: Shinpachi stealing some of Heisuke's food, causing the latter to complain and try to steal the elder's food to no avail, and Sano trying to be the mediator between the two. Hijikata shook his head and scolded the group as always, while Kondo laughed. Once they all finished their meals, they parted ways, save for Okita and Saitou who, since they had prepared tonight's meal, would be cleaning up as well.

"Hajime-kun," Souji voiced once they reached the kitchen.

"What is it?"

He looked to the darker haired man for a moment before shaking his head. "Never mind." He knew with Hajime's lack of experience, he would be the least qualified person to ask.

"Eh, Mizuage?" Sanosuke Harada rubbed his chin as he sat on the steps just outside the meeting room. Souji, who sat next to him, had come to him after he finished cleaning up. He figured either Sano or Shinpachi would suffice, but had run into former first. "That ceremony for new geiko, right?" Souji nodded. "What about it?"

Souji pushed his bangs out of his face as he tried to formulate his words without rousing too much suspicion. "Have ya ever taken one of those girls, Sano-san?"

"Souji, you're not planning on participating, are you?"

He shrugged. "Just curious."

"Do you have a geiko that you like, Souji?" Sano questioned with a sly grin.

"No, I told ya I was just curious," he defended. "I heard some guys talking about in while on patrol the other day."

"I see." Sano nodded his head, his face turning more solemn. "The bidding's far too expensive for the likes of us lowly samurai" Looking up, he added, "You might as well just wait until after that occasion to be with a some other woman around in Shimabara."

"Like you and Shinpachi-san?"

"O-oi!"

Souji chuckled and stood up. "Goodnight, Sano-san!"

"Oi, Souji!" Sano called out, only to be ignored as the younger man walked away, presumably to his quarters.

\* \* \*

><p>"Where are you headed?" Amagiri questioned as he watched the blond open the door to leave the estate they'd been staying in during their time in Kyoto. "Satsuma has no meetings."<p>

"Shimabara," Kazama Chikage answered.

"You've been going there often."

Chikage glanced at the redhead before continuing on. "Something has piqued my interest."

"I see."

Kazama left without another word. He was grateful that it was only Amagiri there with him at the time. He didn't stick his nose where it didn't belong, unlike Shiranui, whom he was sure would be pressing the matter if he were there.

\* \* \*

><p>Souji paused in front of the familiar entrance to the red light district. The week had gone by faster than he had expected, probably because that demon of a woman had been at the back of his mind for the entirety of the week. Now, standing there brought her back into his mind. He wasn't necessarily thinking of her out of concern or worry, butâ€|curiosity. Was she still as nonchalant about her virtue now that tonight was her mizuage?<p>

"Are you thinking of going inside, Okita-san?" one of his squad member's questioned, hopeful.

He was sure that now that it was evening, all of his squad members would appreciate drinking and being in the company of women after

just spending the majority of the day out on patrol. However, he knew if he or his squad were late, their demon vice-commander would have their heads. Maybe he should just allow his men to go in and have some fun just to spire the vice Hijikata. He briefly thought of going inside for a moment, finding wherever the ceremony was being held, and join in on the bidding, but he knew better. Just as Sano said, the bidding would too high for his samurai pay. But still—he was curious.

"Tch," he made a sound of discontent when he reached the ochaya. As he arrived, she was being led away by another man.

\* \* \*

><p>Kazehana sat on the tatami mat in the center of the room. Her legs were folded under her and her hands resting in her lap. She stared at the man sitting in front of her just a few feet away. The auction had taken place half an hour ago and afterward they had been led to a private room, where they'd be spending the rest of the night undisturbed. Though she had told him about the ceremony, she hadn't expected for him to show up, nor had she expected him to place the highest bid. She continued to stare at him as he insouciantly poured himself a cup of sake. As he brought the warm liquid to his lips, his gaze met hers.<p>

"What?" he questioned, breaking the long silence.

"What do you want me to do?" she returned. "How shall I lay for you?" She began untying the obi and slid off her kimono, leaving in only her white underkimono.

"Do you wish to be taken by me?" He put down the cup and stood up, making the small trek to her. Once he reached her, he roughly pushed her down. She let out an inaudible gasp when her back hit the floor. He hovered over her, sliding her juban down below her shoulders, exposing the wrapping around her chest. His eyes met with hers, a smirk on his face. "Shall I take you now?" he asked in a low, alluring voice. She let out an unintentionally sharp breath and he reached for her wrappings, pulling them down.

"Kazama-san..."

"Tsk." He stopped and moved away from her, sitting down and crossing his legs. "Sit up," he commanded.

"Why did you stop?" Kazehana asked as she sat up, fixing her wrappings back over her breast and then slipping her juban back over her shoulders.

"Did you want me to continue, have my way and ravish you?" She didn't answer and he let out a snort.

"Kazama-san." Not bothering to put on her kimono, she made her way over to him, taking a seat to his right. She poured sake into his discarded cup and handed it to him. "If you aren't going to do that, then may I ask why you are here?"

"Should you not be thanking me for leaving you in one piece?" When she did not respond his face grew solemn as he brought the sake to

his lips. "Simple," he answered as he held the cup out for more. "I cannot allow one of those greedy humans to defile such precious goods."

\_Precious goods? \_What was she, a load of cargo?

Kazama smirked at the incredulous look on her face, setting down the cup and leaning in close to her so they were eye level and their face only a few inches apart. "Did you think you could hide from me, that I would not notice?"

She looked away. "Notice what?"

He chuckled, darkly, "You acting is terrible." Her purple eyes narrowed as he continued. "Female oni are rare, even those who aren't pureblooded"

"How?" she questioned, brows furrowed. How could he have known? She was careful to not drop her guard around anyone.

"That cut on your hand healed in an instant. Did you think I wouldn't notice such a telltale sign?" Kazehana inwardly cursed as she remembered. When she had served him last week, she scratched her hand on the shoji door. She should have been more careful to hide it. "Now, let me ask you, what are your reasons for being in such a place?" He crossed his arms over his chest as he waited for an answer.

She never had a reason to be working as a geiko. In fact, she was just traveling around, out of well, boredom. Kazehana shrugged. "I was bored."

"You were bored?" Kazama repeated, his eyes narrowing at the woman.

She had only intended to use that woman's offer of working in one of the ochaya in Shimabara to have shelter for the few days she would spend in Kyoto; however, she somehow ended up staying for months. Perhaps, it was Kosuzu's doing, but, Kosuzu was no longer there, so really there was no reason for her to still be there.

"I'll give you a choice: stay here and entertain those worthless human men, or come with me and be in better company."

\* \* \*

><p><strong>AN: \*\*Was it who you thought it would be? Lol. I'm sure there are some of you who wanted it to be Kazama and then another handful of you who wanted Souji, but don't worry. Things are just beginning :]. As for Kazehana being an oni, I kind of hinted at it(mostly at the end of the last chapter and with her lack of response when Souji put a blade to her neck). It was something I had planned from the beginning, but unlike lame ass Chizuru, she actually knows of her heritage. If you have any questions about this, feel free to ask. I'll answer what I can without giving too much away.\*\* Now, do you think Kazehana will stay in Shimabara or go with Kazama?\*

**\*\*A/N: \*\***It's been a while, yeah? I was stuck on this chapter for a while, so I decided to delete what I wrote and start fresh. And wellâ€¦it worked :D. I noticed through the reviews that you guys (at least those who review) are about evenly split between Chikage and Souji. That's pretty much how I feel too! Lol I like them both, so we'll just have to see how everything goes down ;P. Lastly, I appreciate your patience and reviews. Thank you so much.

**\*\*\_Onwards...\_\*\***

\* \* \*

><p><em>"<em>\_I'll give you a choice: stay here and entertain those worthless human men, or come with me and be in better company."\_

\_Much to his annoyance, the woman did not give him a direct answer. Instead, she asked for him to give her time.\_

\_"\_\_Time? Time for what?" he had questioned, bringing his cup to his lips.\_

\_"\_\_Time to think," she answered.\_

\_ " "\_\_There is nothing to think about, woman. How could you refuse my offer? What reason is there for you to stay in this house?"\_

\_ "â€¦| "\_

\_He sucked his teeth in annoyance when she didn't respond. \_This womanâ€¦| \_ " \_\_Fine," he answered firmly. "When I return, I expect an answer."\_

He didn't know what had possessed him. He could have forcefully taken her with him, but instead he had allowed her the time she requested. Now, almost a month later he had made his way through the red light district, expecting for the woman to take him up on his offer, but when he arrived, she was nowhere to be found. His attention was now directed on a young girl who quivered under his hard gaze after he had asked her where who was he looking for was.

"K-Kazehana-san left the other day a-and never came back."

Kazama let out a low growl at her words. \_That womanâ€¦|\_ He turned away, folding his arms inside the sleeves of his top. Just who did she think she was, wasting his time like that? "Impudent bitch," he muttered to himself as he walked away, leaving the young girl in confusion.

**\*\*\_One Night Ago\_\*\***

She should have known better than to leave the geiko house without letting anyone know. She should have known better than to be wandering the streets of Kyoto at night. And she should have known better than to follow the metallic scent of blood that wafted through the cool air of the night, but that coupled with the sharp scream she heard made her want to check it out.

She cursed her curiosity. At her feet lay the mangled body of a woman, blood pooled around the body from the ghastly tear in her abdomen and soaked her kimono. Her mouth hung open slightly with her eyes wide in a frozen fear that was almost comical to her. \_How grotesque.\_ Just as the question of what happened crossed her mind, she spotted a flash of white in her peripheral vision. She turned around and met the crazed red eyes of a man, his hair white, blood staining his clothing, face and sword.

"Are you a- No" She corrected herself. The man was much too rabid. "So you are the cause of this," Kazehana stated, referring to the bloodied body of the woman. The man, \_no\_, thing, let out an animalistic growl before charging for her, his sword raised. Kazehana reached into the sleeve of her kimono, ready to pull out her fan, but felt nothing. \_Damn.\_ Just as she was contemplating what to do, the pointed head of a spear pierced right through the man's chest, hitting his heart. Blood spurted out, and much to Kazehana's disdain splattered onto the front of her kimono. If she hadn't been quick and put a hand in front of her face, blood surely would have gotten onto it as well.

"I thought Souji, Saitou, and Hijikata-san dealt with the last of these things when they brought Chizuru back." He sighed as he pulled the spear out of the now lifeless body. It teetered for a few seconds before tumbling forward. When the body fell was when he realized he was not alone. "Who's there?" He questioned, pointing his sword in her direction..

"This is the second time you'veâ€¦\_saved \_me, Harada-san."

His eyes widened seeing the familiar person standing a few feet away from him, blood staining her kimono. "K-Kazehana-san?" He wiped the blood off his spear and faced it down as he made his way toward her. "What are you doing out here?" The last thing he had hoped for was a witness to the abomination.

"I was on a stroll."

"Outside of Shimabara?"

"Is it really so strange for me to want to be away from that place at times?"

"Well, no, butâ€¦" He trailed off. "You really shouldn't have seen that."

"Will you kill me for it?" She questioned, looking him dead in the eye. His lips formed a tight line as her eyes met his. The moonlight made it seem as though the purple orbs were glowing with an eerie hue.

"No," he answered with a frown, "but I can't let you go." He grabbed a hold of her wrist, pulling her along with him. He cursed his luck at finding another one of those failed soldiers roaming the streets and for this woman being there. He was sure Hijikata would definitely not be happy about bringing in a new guest.

\* \* \*

><p>"What's taking Sano-san so long?" Heisuke wondered aloud as he stretched his limbs. The group of men were sitting in the room where they usually held private meetings, waiting for the last of the captains to arrive from his patrol.<p>

"Heh, he probably stopped in Shimabara," Shinpachi suggested.

"I doubt he would neglect his duties for such a thing," Hajime Saitou, the usually quiet one, stated. "If it were you, however..." he drifted off.

"Hey!" Shinpachi protested. "What's that supposed to mean!"

"Ha! It means you have no self-control, old man!" Heisuke laughed.

"What are you calling old, you little twerp?!"

An argument ensued, as it usually did with the two, Heisuke mouthing off while Shinpachi held the younger boy in a headlock. They continued to bicker until the vice-commander slammed his hand to the floor, silencing them.

"That's enough, you two!"

Chizuru, who had entered the room a short time ago with a tray of freshly boiled tea, jumped at the vice-commander's actions, nearly spilling a cup of tea on the first unit captain.

"Watch it, Chizuru-chan, I might have had to kill ya if that happened." He winked at her before taking the cup of tea of the tray. Chizuru brows furrowed at his words. Though she had been with the group for a little over two weeks, she was not yet used to his facetious attitude.

"Calm down, Toshi," the commander, Kondo Isami said as he placed on hand on the aggravated man's shoulder.

"Heh, he probably found some rasetsu roaming around," Souji commented nonchalantly, earning a glare from Sannan, who was in charge of them. "Mah, mah, don't give me that look Sannan-san! Two got out when we found Chizuru-chan, I'm sure more could have."

Sannan frowned at his words. "Okita..."

Kondo sighed, "Liste-" But the door slid open, capturing everyone's attention and interrupting whatever he was going to say.

"Sano!" Shinpachi called out.

"What took you so lo-" Hijikata stopped short, as Sanosuke stepped inside with someone following close behind him. His brows furrowed seeing the familiar woman behind the broad shouldered man

"Hey, isn't that the girl from the ochaya?" Heisuke inquired.

Shinpachi grinned. "So you did go to-"

"Explain," Hijikata demanded harshly, cutting Shinpachi off. Sanosuke

sighed and pushed the woman in front of him, forcing her to sit directly in front of the vice-commander. Hijikata's purple eyes narrowed as he caught sight of the blood smeared on the front of her kimono.

"I found one of our failed soldiers. By the time I got to the scene it had already killed someone, I didn't notice she was standing there until after I got rid of it." Sanosuke explained.

"So you brought her here?" Hijikata looked the young woman over with a frown.

"What else could I do?"

"If it were me, I would have just killed her," Souji stated from across the room.

"Souji! Don't say that, you'll scare her," Kondo reprimanded.

"You would have put your sword to my neck again, am I correct, Okita-san?" She didn't turn to look at him as she spoke. Her words shocked the room and all eyes tuned from her to Souji.

"Heh," he chuckled. "Are you still mad about that?"

"You know this woman, Souji?" Kondo asked. "And when did you put a sword to her neck? I thought I taught you better than to threaten a woman!"

"Ah, Kondo-san," Souji sighed, scratching his head.

"Don't worry, miss. No one will harm you here. I'm Kondo Isami." Kondo said, giving her a gentle smile.

"Kondo-san, don't act so friendly towards someone we've just captured," Hijikata said, shaking his head. "Kazehana is her name," He added, answering the commander's first question.

"Eh, you know her too, Toshi?" Kondo asked in confusion.

"I'm surprised you remembered me, Hijikata-san."

His glare softened slightly as he spoke, "I wouldn't forget the maiko whose hair I cut." His hardened look then returned. "Now, what did you see?" Kazehana took a moment to survey the room before answering.

"I was just on an evening stroll when I heard a scream, that's all. I suppose I let my curiosity get the best of me."

"Isn't it a little too late to be walking out alone?"

"It's the only time I have to myself."

Hijikata gave a long sigh, "Unfortunately because of what you have witnessed, I cannot let you go, but keeping you here would cause a problem as well. We evaded suspicion with Chizuru because she's has masqueraded herself as a man, you on other handâ€¦" He paused, looking away and clearing his throat. "May be harder to disguise," he finished.



"Eh?" Chizuru shrunk in embarrassment. Was he saying that woman was more womanly than her? She inwardly sighed as she looked her over. It was obvious that she more feminine. Her black hair was tied up in the elaborate style of the geiko with a few ornaments decorating her head. Her lips were a light pink, as were her cheeks, and though her kimono covered her properly, it was apparent that the woman's chest was much bigger than hers. She groaned, looking away from the girl.

"What should we do then?" Kondo asked, seeing that his vice-commander was stuck.

"Just let her be someone's woman," Souji casually suggested. "It shouldn't be too suspicious since she's from Shimabara. Just say one of you liked her so much that you decided to pay her way outta there and keep her for yourself."

"We couldn't possibly!" Hijikata interjected.

"Hmâ€¦" Kondo put a hand to his chin in thought. "That could work."

"But, Kondo-san," the vice-commander protested with furrowed brows. He had a certain respect for women, and despite the fact that she worked in the red-light district, he was opposed to having her play at being one of his men's whore.

"Relax, Hijikata-san, it would only be a front to allow her to stay here," Souji assured. "She wouldn't have to do anything, \_unless\_-"

"Souji!"

The younger man laughed, waving his hand side to side nonchalantly in a "don't mind" manner, "Alright, alright. No need to get so worked up, Hijikata-san"

"But whose would she be?" Sanosuke inquired after some time.

"I don't mind," Shinpachi offered with a grin.

"No way, Shinpatsu-san! You'd take advantage of her; she should be with me! I'd treat her nicely." Heisuke protested, pushing the older man's shoulder.

"No I wouldn't! And you're too young for her, you little runt!" He again put the younger boy into a headlock.

"Shinpachi, Heisuke! Enough already," Hijikata said exasperatedly. "She'll be Souji's responsibility."

Green eyes widened. "\_Me?\_" Sano's the one who brought her here, why not him?"

Hijikata shook his head. "Was it not your idea, Souji?"

Okita faltered. "Well yeah, but-" He stopped short, eyes narrowing in suspicion. "Is this because I said you should be the one to watch over Chizuru?"

Hijikata's mouth gave the slightest twitch before he answered, "Of course not."

"Eh, Hiji-"

"It's settled then. She'll be your responsibility, Souji." He then turned his attention to the only other female in the room.  
"Chizuru."

"Y-yes, Hijikata-san?"

"I think it's best she stays in your room for the time being since you're both girls. Take her to get cleaned up."

"Yes!" Chizuru made her way over to the woman, helping her up. "Come with me," she said as she led the woman out.

Souji sent the man a final glare before crossing his arms stubbornly over his chest and turning away. "Hmph, fine," he huffed out as he exited the room. The others follow him in suit eventually leaving only the commander and his two vice-commanders.

"I thought you would have charged Sano with watching over her, or maybe even Saitou," Sannan mused.

"Yes, that's seems the most logical doesn't it?" Hijikata thoughtfully agreed. "However, I suppose I did have to return Souji the favor."

Kondo and Sannan both let out hearty laughs. \_So it was just as Souji thought.\_

**\*\*\_Presently\_\*\***

Kazehana sat in front of the shoji door, combing through her thick, black hair with her fingers. The door was slightly opened, bringing in the fresh air and allowing the light of the late morning sun to enter the room. She was alone since Chizuru had gone to breakfast half an hour ago. She smiled slightly thinking back on the young girl trying to convince her to eat. When she heard footsteps coming her way, she paused, comb halfway through her hair.

"You're allowed to dine with the others, you know."

"I'm not very hungry."

"You're wearing that again?" He questioned, observing that she was in the dirtied kimono she had arrived in the night before.

Kazehana glanced up at the purpled eyed vice commander before answering. "This is all I have. The rest of my clothing is at the geiko house."

Hijikata sighed, his brows furrowing in the process. "Ah, that's right. It seems the Shinsengumi have again caused you trouble."

"Shinsengumi?"

"Yes, we are now the Shinsengumi after parting ways with Serizawa-san."

"Parting ways, huh?" She paused, turning her attention back to her hair and resuming combing through it. She had a feeling that they didn't just "part" ways. "If it's not too much trouble, Hijikata-san, I'd like to go out to buy a few things. I assume that I'll be kept here for some time. I'm a prisoner, correct?"

"I'm sorry for this, but it was a necessary precaution." He crossed his arms across his chest.

Kazehana tilted her head down, strands of her hair falling forward and covering bits of her face. "The vice-commander of the Shinsengumi shouldn't be so soft with the captives."

"I'll have Souji escort you out into town." He said firmly before taking his leave, but not without looking back over his shoulder to see the corner of her lips upturn in the subtlest of smirks. His eyes narrowed as he turned back around, heading for the dining hall.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>AN: \*\*I actually did proofread this time, for once, but things still could have gotten passed me. Sorry for any grammar or spelling mistakes. I tried to make this chapter longer than the rest because I felt like my previous chapter were rather short, so this chapter is about 2,500 words while the other were around 1,200. I'm going to try to keep this up because I need to work on adding details, because like my teachers say I tend to be a bit too concise when writing lol. What do you guys think of the length? Reviews are greatly appreciated, thanks for reading! :)

## 9. IX

\*\*A/N: \*\*This isn't edited yet due to it being 3:30 in the morning (ridiculous time to update, I know), so forgive any spelling and/or grammar mistakes. I will find and fix whatever I can at a more decent time.

\*\*Onwards" \*\*

\* \* \*

><p>"Finally!" Shinpachi exclaimed when Hijikata entered the Shinsengumi's designated dining quarters. "What took you so long, Hijikata-san? I'm starving!" All the captains were in the room waiting to begin their meal, save for Sannan, who as of late preferred to eat in his room in the company of himself.<p>

Hijikata took his usual place by Kondo's side before answering, "I was talking with Kazehana."

"Oh yeah, where's she at?" Sano, whom sat a few ways from him to the left of Heisuke, asked, having forgotten that they had a newly acquired tenant.

"She wasn't hungry, so I let her be." He picked up his chopsticks, pulling them apart and adding, "I gave her permission to go into town

today."

"Is it wise to let her out so soon?" Saitou calmly asked. "Can she be trusted?"

Chizuru, who sat by Sano wondered this as well. She'd been with the Shinsengumi much longer than Kazehana, yet she had not been allowed out. Well, she hadn't exactly asked to go out due to the fear of them killing her, but maybe if he was allowing Kazehana to go outside headquarters he'd allow her to go as well.

"What if she tries to run away?" Heisuke threw out.

"Of course she won't be by herself; Souji will be with her."

Souji put his chopsticks down and sent the vice commander a look that was none too pleasant. "Why do I have to babysit?"

"Because she's your responsibility," Hijikata countered. He then turned his attention back to the rest of the group. "Whether she is trustworthy or not is unknown, but Souji will observe her actions in town. If she does anything suspicious or tries to run away then we can--"

"Kill her?" Souji interrupted, his green eyes glistening.

Hijikata sent him a sharp glare and finished, "Deal with her accordingly."

\* \* \*

><p>"Hah~ aren't you cold in that?" Souji asked when he spotted Kazehana sitting just outside of Chizuru's room. He was the first to finish his meal and had decided he wanted to get whatever Hijikata wanted him to do with the woman over with as soon as possible. She was dressed in only her white under-kimono, and sat on the ledge, so her tabi(socks) covered feet were dangling above the ground, while her geta sandals were sitting next to her.<p>

Kazehana leaned her head back and to her right as she acknowledged the man. "I was born in the winter, so I am particularly fond of this type of weather. The cold has never been a problem for me." And that was true, and even the heat of summer, though she preferred the cold, had never caused her much trouble due to her immune system being more proficient than others. Winter was also nearing an end, so it was not quite as cold as it had been the past couple of months.

"You're here to take me into town, correct?" Kazehana asked as she stood up, sliding her feet into her geta. Using her hands, she brushed them against her under-kimono to straighten any creases it may have incurred from having been sitting down. "We can go now, if you're ready." She stated walking passed him. She didn't get far though, due to the tug on her arm that drew her backward. She shot him a questioning look from over her shoulder.

"You're going to throw something on, right?" He questioned. It was improper for a woman to be out in only her under-kimono. Even for her to just be sitting outside like this was inappropriate, not that it bothered him. The short length of her under-kimono did allow him a good view of her legs.

"And just what am I to throw on, Okita-san? My only clothing is stained with blood. It seems the Roshi-" She stopped to correct herself as she recalled Hijikata telling her of the group's name change early that morning. "Shinsen\_gumi excel in ruining my kimonos, my favorite kimonos at that."

Souji's green eyes narrowed. He did not miss the direct jab at he and Sano, more so him than the latter. He remembered when he had his sword at her neck, Tonuichi's blood dripping from the blade onto the purple kimono she was wearing.

"Wash it," he suggested.

"Would you really wait for me to wash and hang the kimono up to dry?"

He snorted, "No, I suppose I wouldn't. Hm..." He put a hand to his chin in thought. "Ah, I'll let you borrow one of my yukata. I'm sure one of them can fit you."

"Okita-san, do you know how it'll look for a woman to be wearing a man's yukata? Plus it's winter." Yukata were usually reserved for the summer, so no doubt she would be getting strange looks for wearing something so thin in the winter.

"Did you forget whose woman you're acting as?"

Kazehana pursed her lips. That was right. \_Because a woman's presence in the Shinsengumi would cause a commotion among the men and she could not disguise herself as a boy like Chizuru had, she had to pose as his kept woman. "Fine then," she answered. "Please find me something suitable, Okita-san."

"Since you're my woman," Souji started as he led her to his room. "I think it's time you start calling me Okita-kun or Souji-kun."

"I don't know if I'd like to refer to the man who twice threatened me so informally. Okita-san will do just fine\_."

"You're not gonna let that go are you?" Souji laughed, glancing down at the girl by his side. "I was just joking, Kazehana-chan!"

She glanced at him from the side, giving him a tight smile. "A joke in poor taste." Lies. \_She knew neither time was a joke. It wasn't that she feared for her life that bothered, no; she didn't think him to be capable enough to harm her. Her real issue was that he even dared to threaten her life and put his dirtied blade to her neck, but she was sure anyone would have had a problem with that. \_And\_ he did ruin her favorite kimono; the only thing she'd brought to Kyoto with her aside from her metal fan.

When they reached his room, he slid the door open, allowing Kazehana to enter first before coming in behind her and sliding the door shut. Kazehana stayed near the door as he went further into the room to the small cabinet that stored his clothing. After a few moment of digging around, he pulled out a plain navy blue yukata with a sand colored obi. Walking back to where she stood, he held it up. "Here, try this."

Kazehana eyed the dark yukata before taking it and slipping in on. Grabbing the obi next, she wrapped it around starting from the front and reached behind herself making sure she tied the sash. She knew it was too big for her, so she made sure to tie the obi extra tightly. It pooled to her feet due to their height difference, but her geta sandals would hopefully alleviate any chance of her stepping on or tripping over the fabric.

"How is it?" She asked once everything was in place.

Souji's lips curled upwards forming a smirk. "Could be better."

Kazehana rolled her eyes turning around and opening the door. "Let's go."

\* \* \*

><p>Kazehana could feel the eyes of several people, civilians and merchants alike, looking at her disapprovingly as she walked down the streets. She hoped that it was because she was wearing a yukata during the winter and not because they could tell the yukata was meant for a man. Souji, who walked next to her on the left, didn't seem to mind the stares. In fact, judging by the amused look on his face, he seemed to be enjoying it.<p>

"Hey, aren't you going to get a kimono?" Souji asked when he spotted a merchant up ahead who was selling kimono.

"Actually, I'd like to go to Shimabara and retrieve whatever I can of my things. I don't exactly have any money with me." She mused, passing without sparing the merchant a glance, "I wonder if they think I've run away..."

It had been only been a day since Sano had unexpectedly brought Kazehana to the Shinsengumi headquarters, but she had had no contact with anyone besides the Shinsengumi. The owner of the okiya, or geiko house probably thought she ran away. Souji frowned at that thought. He'd heard stories of what happened to maiko and geiko who tried to run away and were caught. Because of the girls who'd try to run away, the okiya often times had men to guard the place at night. Any maiko in her position wouldn't even think of setting foot back in Shimabara, but here she was fully intent on going back. \_But wait a minute. \_He'd seen her wandering around at night away from the okiya, and when Sano found her she was far from it. How was it that she was so easily able to wander about?

"Hmm~"

"Is something wrong, Okita-san?" Kazehana asked, hearing the noise he had made.

"Nah, just thinking," he answered. Kazehana glanced at him before nodding her head and focusing forward.

The two continued on in silence as they reached Shimabara. It was considerably less busy during the day than in the evening, but there were still quite a few people roaming around. They were mostly maiko and geiko going in and out of Shimabara to purchase what they needed to perform their night's duties, but a few men could be seen chatting

up the women. Kazehana stopped when she reached her okiya, Souji stopping just behind her. Outside sweeping just in front of the entrance was Reika, a geiko in her late twenties Kazehana had entertained with before on a few occasions when she was still a maiko.

"Reika-san," she called out, garnering the older woman's attention. The woman stopped sweeping and looked over to see who had called her out. Her brown eyes widened in surprise, but the surprise was soon replaced with an irritated glare.

"Where have you been?" She then noticed the man standing behind Kazehana. "And who's this?!" She demanded.

"I came to speak with Okaa-san," Kazehana informed, ignoring her questions.

Reika frowned and dropped the broom, turning her back. "Fine, follow me."

Kazehana turned to Souji. "Stay here, I won't be long," she told him before slipping off her geta and following Reika inside. For the most part the okiya was empty since at this time most of the girls were in the ochaya practicing dance and preparing for the night's entertainment. She was led through the familiar halls until they reached a closed door at the very end. Reika gave a door two light knocks before sliding it open and entering first.

"What is it that you need Reika?" came the mature voice of the head geiko and owner of the ochaya. She was a woman in her late forties with dull brown hair tied up in a tight bun. She was sitting behind a low table, writing something down on a small scroll.

"\_Someone\_ would like to have a word with you, Okaa-san."

"Who is this someone?" At that, Reika stepped aside, allowing Kazehana to enter the room, shutting the door behind her. She bowed, greeting the woman politely.

"Hello, Okaa-san."

The woman, who had not once turned her attention away from what was on the low table, looked up, her brows furrowed in anger. She stood up, stalking over to the new arrival. "Kazehana? Where have you been you insolent brat?!"

"I got caught up with some things," she answered simply.

"\_Caught up with some things?\_" Okaa-san repeated incredulously.

"She came here with a man, Okaa-san," Reika pointed out, moving to the older woman's side.

Her eyes widened before narrowing, an knowing look appearing on her face. "I see, so you were with a man, were you?" Okaa-san accused, grabbing Kazehana tightly by the forearm.

"I'd appreciate it if you'd please unhand me."

"How very stupid of you to run away and then come back here with him!" She yelled, ignoring her request.

Kazehana sighed, closing her eyes. "Yamagami Kagero, I asked you to unhand me." She roughly pulled her hand back, surprising the woman not only with her strength, but with the knowledge of her true name.

"How do you know my name? I don't recall ever telling you," Okaa-san, or Kagero, asked warily.

She was no minder reader if that's what Kagero was thinking; she just had a good hearing and had happened to be around when she muttered her name. Kazehana shrugged, "I'm good with names."

"You stupid girl, if you think-"

"Actually, Kagero-san," Kazehana cut the older woman off. "I came to get my things and inform you that I will no longer be a part of this establishment, so if we could cut this short."

"\_What?\_" Reika laughed, shaking her head. "Do you think because Kosuzu successfully slipped away, that you can do the same? You can't leave here until all your debt is paid."

"I, unlike the others, haven't been here for years, so what debt is it that you speak of, Reika-san?"

"I-Iâ€¦you haveâ€¦.You-"

"Exactly. Now, if you don't mind, I'll go grab my things." Kazehana bowed, and turned around sliding the door open.

"I should have known better than to offer some girl wandering around a place here!" Kagero uttered ruefully.

Kazehana stopped and looked over her shoulder one last time, giving them an impish smile. "Yes, you should have," she agreed before leaving the two women to themselves.

\* \* \*

><p>"Mah~, what's taking so long?" Souji wondered aloud. He was leaning against the wooden wall with his arms crossed over his chest, his head tilted back and his eyes closed. It had been about fifteen minutes since Kazehana had followed the other woman into the okiya and she had yet to return. Had they assumed she'd run away? Was she now being punished for it? Should he go inside and see what was taking so long? Just as he was contemplating whether or not to go inside, someone cleared their throat, making their presence known.<p>

Souji eyes popped open, hand already on the hilt of his sword. When he saw that it was only the girl he had been impatiently waiting for, he sighed, dropping his hand. In her arms were colorful, folded fabrics, which he assumed were her kimono and yukata. "Ya shouldn't sneak up on me like that, Kazehana-chan, I might have killed ya."

Kazehana shot him a pointed look. "Are you threatening me \_again\_,



Okita-san?"

"Haha, I was just kidding, Kazehana-chan." He laughed. When Kazehana did not join, he sighed pushing himself away from the wall. "Ready to head back?"

"Yes."

About a minute into their walk, right before they would exit the red light district, a voice called out to Kazehana. She turned around to see a familiar brown haired, brown eyed girl. "Oh, Kiku."

"Hana, where did you go?" Kiku asked, her brows furrowed in a worrisome manner. She glanced at the brown haired male standing next to her former fellow maiko before continuing, "There was a man who came looking for you."

"\_Hm\_~?" Souji turn his head, his interest piqued at the mention of a man coming to look for her.

"A man?"

Kiku nodded. "Yes, he came looking for you, but when I told him you had been gone for some time, he left."

"Did he give his name?" Kazehana asked.

"No, but he had blond hair."

\_Blond hair.\_ She only knew one man with blond hair. "Kazama-san" She had completely forgotten about his proposition. He said he would return for her answer, but he never gave her an exact time, so when several weeks passed and her encounter with the Shinsengumi, it simply slipped her mind. She had made a decision, but now with her current situation that decision no longer mattered. "That's too bad," she uttered, turning away. "I must be going now."

"W-wait!" Kiku called out. "Are you leaving for good?"

Kazehana sent the girl a small smile from over her shoulder. "Yes."

Kiku furrowed her brows, her mouth downturn in a pout. She looked from Kazehana to the handsome man beside her, eying him down before bowing low to him. "Please take care of her."

"Hou~?" Souji smirked, placing an arm lazily around his companion's shoulders. "She's in good hands!"

"I let you go now," Kiku stated, straightening up, "but hopefully, we'll see each other again, okay?" She waved before running off further into the district.

When the girl was out of sight Kazehana shrugged his arm off her shoulders. "I hardly need to be taken care of"

\* \* \*

><p>Come dinner time, Kazehana found herself in the mess hall sitting between Souji and another man whom she had not met the night before.

She felt much more comfortable now being in her own clothing. Her kimono was a plain, very light pink color with a slightly darker collar and was held closed with a purple obi. Though her hair was still worn down, she clipped her bangs back, so they were out of her face and created a small bump.<p>

"Sannan won't be eating with us," Hijikata said as he entered the room.

"I guess he's really bummed, huh?" Shinpachi commented as Hijikata took his seat near Kondo. Kazehana was curious as to what happened to who they were talking about, and was tempted to ask, but figured it wasn't in her place.

"Is he working on th-"

"Hey!" Sano cut the youngest, Heisuke, off. "It's Kazehana-san's first meal with us, but I don't think we ever properly introduced ourselves to her yet!" His attention span must have been short because his attention seemed to quickly change to the woman sitting across the room.

"That's right! I-" He was again interrupted, but this time by the very woman whom he was going to introduce himself to.

"There's no need for such introductions, I know who most of you are," she stated. "Toudou Heisuke, Nagakura Shinpachi, Harada Sanosuke, Okita Souji, Hijikata Toshizo, and Kondo Isami."

The others didn't seem bothered as she rattled off their names for they'd met on several occasions, but Heisuke and Shinpachi gave her strange looks. Before they could ask how she knew their full names she continued, "I'm good with names, plus I've met all of you at some point in Shimabara." Heisuke and Shinpachi looked visibly more relaxed at that as they recalled seeing her there.

She then glanced at the man to her right and at the stoic man sitting on Souji's left. "I'm sorry, but you two are the only ones I'm unfamiliar with."

The man on her right gave her a gentle smile as he introduced himself, "Inoue Genzaburou."

"Saitou Hajime," the stoic one answered.

"Nice to meet you." She said with a small smile.

Sano nudged Chizuru gently with his elbow. "You should introduce yourself too."

"A-ah, right!" She bowed her head and gave her name, "Yukimura Chizuru!"

\_Yukimura?\_ Kazehana looked up, her purple eyes shifting onto the younger girl.

"Yukimura...Chizuru!" she repeated quietly, her eyes trained on the girl studying her every feature. Chizuru feeling the intense gaze looked up and blushed when she met luminescent purple eyes. Kazehana smiled before turning her attention back to the whole group. "I

should give myself a proper introduction as well." She bowed her head and gave them her name, though they already knew it, "I am Kazehana."

"Eh? Kazehana what?" Heisuke questioned.

"Just Kazehana," she affirmed.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>AN: \*\*I'm just going to end it there because I feel like it's already a lot going on in this chapter. I find that Kazehana just gets keeps getting snarkier and snarkier with Okita the more I write her. I mean, I guess if someone put a sword to my throat I wouldn't be too friendly with them either lol. Don't ask me how I got 8 pages in and I managed to pull out 3,000+ words, it just happened. I think it's because I watched the second Hakuouki movie: Shikon Soukyuu and got somewhat inspired. Also, I made a few minor changes to the previous chapters just so I could work around things better, nothing too drastic.

\*\*Random note\*\*: For some reason I find that a few days after I post a chapter, I think of something even better that I could have written. This has happened to me the past couple of chapters, so I made notes of the ideas and will hopefully be able to use them in a future Hakuouki story.

\*\*Question: What did you guys think of the 2nd Hakuouki movie? (If you watched it) \*\*Feel free to leave your answer in a review or pm :)

I definitely preferred the movie's ending over the anime's. It made me \*\*almost\*\* reconsider where I wanted this story to go. You know what really got me? That last scene with Saitou and Souji. (Cue internal sobbing) :

\*\*If you read through all those notes at the end then you're amazing! \*\*Thanks for reading! Much love manitas!

## 10. Important Author's Note

I apologize if you all were hoping for an update. I truly appreciate the 7k+ views, all the favorites, follows, and reviews.

I've been working on the next chapter of this story and I've been stuck for months. After being stuck on what to write for so long, I've come to the realization that I don't really like the direction the story is going. There are things in the plot that I don't like, for example: making her stay in the Shinsengumi headquarters. Pretty played out in a lot of Hakuouki fanfics, am I right or am I right? lol. I also made the pairing Chikage x OC x Souji. I don't know if you can tell or not, but I had originally planned for the Shinsengumi love interest to be Sano, hence why he was the first to be introduced. But...Souji's my favorite character and he weaseled his way in.

I haven't completely come to a decision yet, but I'm leaning heavily towards rewriting this. To me the story has just gotten "BLAH". I think for the most part if I rewrite it, some aspects will be the

same, but I'll definitely try to add more details and just try to make it something that I like putting out to you readers. Haven't decided if the rewritten version will remain Chikage x OC x Souji or if it will be Chikage x OC x Sano. I do really love me some Okita Souji, but Sano's a pretty decent guy. I'd say he's the most well rounded. Anyways, that's all I had to say.

Of course it is 2:42am as I write this because when do I ever not post something at a ridiculous time? Again, I apologize if you thought this was a new chapter.

XOXO,

fianna2452

End  
file.